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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DHAKA 004567

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: HIS BOSS SAYS QUAYYUM WAS FRAMED FOR KIBRIA'S MURDER

Classified By: A/DCM D.C. McCullough, reason para 1.4 b,d.

11. (C) Summary: The Chairman of one of Bangladesh's largest conglomerates believes that his employee, the key defendant in the Kibria assassination, was framed, though he says he does not know by whom or why. He contradicted statements by Quayyum and Political Secretary Haris Chowdhury denying they had a significant relationship, saying the two were "very close" Discussion about Quayyum's job as the bag man for Rangs reflect the reality of doing business in Bangladesh. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On September 8, RLA met the Chairman of Rangs Corporation, Rouf Choudhury, for one hour to discuss his employee, Abdul Quayyum, the chief defendant in the Kibria murder case. Choudhury is a Bangladesh-born American citizen who graduated from MIT and later the Sloan School of Business. He founded Rangs Corporation, which is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh whose interests range from the sale of household goods to communications, news media, and transportation.

13. (C) When asked if Quayyum were capable of murdering Kibria, Choudhury replied firmly and without blinking an eye: "Absolutely not." He stated that Quayyum was framed but could not say by whom or why Quayyum would be chosen to take the fall. He contradicted statements by Quayyum and the Political Secretary to the Prime Minister, Haris Chowdhury, by saying the two were "very close." Quayyum and Chowdhury, in separate interviews, have both denied that they had much to do with each other except for occasional greetings.

14. (SBU) Chairman Choudhury offered Quayyum a job at Rangs some 20 years ago when Quayyum's father, a customs inspector at the airport, asked the chairman if he could find work for his son. Choudhury agreed to talk to him. Quayyum had been active in BNP student politics in the 1970s and, according to Choudhury, knew a lot of politicians from that time, including Haris Chowdhury. The Rangs boss described Quayyum as a "funny" guy recalling that when he asked if Quayyum would go to Chittagong to work, he was taken aback when Quayyum refused because he had a girlfriend elsewhere. All the same, Quayyum was given a job and eventually handled government relations based on his connections and his pushy, brazen ways.

15. (C) Choudhury, an erudite and thoughtful man in his sixties, was clearly embarrassed about Quayyum's role of dispensing bribes for his company. He stated that at one point he needed new ships for his fishing fleet and Quayyum was dispatched to determine the amount of money necessary to get BDG permission to buy the boats. The chairman stated he doesn't like to do business this way but there were 800 employees whose livelihood depended on safe, efficient boats and 800 families depended on that livelihood.

16. (C) Choudhury eventually learned from other sources that Quayyum would ask for more money from the chairman than the amount demanded and then pocket the extra amount. Quayyum became affluent from the skimming and from playing the stock market in ways that are now under separate investigation. When the police began their investigation of alleged stock manipulation, the entire Rangs office was put in lockdown and everyone had to remain in their seats while the investigators cleaned out Quayyum's office. Chairman Choudhury was questioned.

17. (C) The reason Choudhury believes that Quayyum was framed, he said, is that the employee wasn't smart enough to plan something like an assassination conspiracy that and at the same time he was not stupid enough to start plastering his campaign posters all over the district only days after the assassination. Choudhury said any guilty person would know enough to lie low and not draw attention to himself.

18. (C) Quayyum told A/Legatt and RLA previously that he got his vice-chairmanship of the BNP district committee in Habiganj through the intervention of Choudhury with Tareque Rahman, the prime minister's son. Choudhury said he was friends with Tareque and their families would socialize together. The Rangs chairman also believed that the prime minister and her son were better people than those who surround them. He stated that every appointment to a BNP district board would have to be approved by Tareque but that

Harris Chowdhury was probably responsible for Quayyum's actual appointment.

9.(C) RLA told Choudhury that Quayyum's family was running out of money due to the fact that its bank accounts were frozen. He said he had arranged for Quayyum's provident fund to be given over to the family. RLA stated that things were so desperate that the two boys who were in top schools had to withdraw because there was not enough money to pay for tuition. He then asked quietly: "Will I look bad if I help them out?"

10. (C) Comment: Quayyum is the key to the BDG's case and its claim to have solved the Kibria killing. We continue to analyze bank documents and telephone logs provided to us in this case, and intend to speak with several other persons who should be able to offer valuable insight into Quayyum's character. At this point, it is still hard to decide whether Quayyum's links to Haris Chowdhury, Tareque Rahman, and the BNP reflect simply the sordid nature of Bangladeshi politics or something more sinister. The Rangs' chairman's assertion that Quayyum and Haris Chowdhury had a significant relationship is compelling and suggests that Quayyum refused to implicate Haris because he still hopes Haris will eventually rescue him from the Kibria charge. If Quayyum is guilty, his motive is a mystery since his alleged motivation to succeed Kibria in parliament is looking increasingly untenable. If Quayyum is in fact being framed, a process of elimination would suggest the involvement of very influential BDG personages.
CHAMMAS